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COMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

EYES ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUMTRK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/7/31
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

L C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 422

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PHAM HUY CO

REF: A. SAIGON 158
B. SAIGON 317

1. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DR PHAM HUY CO DISCUSSED THE COMING ELECTIONS WITH AN EMBOFF JULY 4. CO SAID HE CONSIDERS

THESE ELECTIONS TO BE ALL-IMPORTANT FOR VIET-NAM. IF A CIVILIAN WINS, HE SAID, VIET-NAM WILL HAVE PASSED A MAJOR HURDLE; IF THE MILITARY SLATE WINS, THEN THE ELECTIONS WILL COUNT FOR NOTHING.

2. DR CO STYLES HIMSELF A TRUE INDEPENDENT, ALLIED WITH NO RELIGIOUS GROUP OR POLITICAL FACTION. HE SAID THAT THESE ELEMENTS ARE SO FACTIONALIZED THAT SUPPORT FROM ANY OF THEM MIGHT BE MORE OF A HINDRANCE THAN A HELP. CO SAYS HE TOURED THE COUNTRY THIS SPRING AND FOUND SUPPORT FOR HIS CANDIDACY EVERYWHERE. HE CLAIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT EVERY MEMBER OF THE BINH DINH PROVINCIAL COUNCIL SIGNED A PETITION SPONSORING HIM FOR PRESIDENT.

3. CO SAID HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE IS PEACE, BUT PEACE MUST BE WON BY FORCE OF ARMS AND NOT BY NEGOTIATING WITH THE ENEMY. HE WANTS TO ACHIEVE SUCH A DECISIVE VICTORY OVER THE COMMUNISTS THAT THEY CANNOT USE THE PERIOD WHEN NEGOTIATIONS ARE TAKING PLACE AS A BREATHING SPELL. A

CLASSIFICATION

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 422 C O N N I D E N T I A L
FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE VIET-NAM PROBLEM WILL HAVE TO TAKE IVNTO ACCOUNT "ALL COUNTRIES WHO ARE PARTIES TO THE WAR," I.E., BOTH NORTH AND SOUTMK VIET-NAM, THE U.S., COMMUNIST CHINA, THAILAND, AUSTRALIA, AND SO FORTH.

4. SPEAKING OF OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES CO CHARACTERIZED PHAN KHAC SUU AS A MAN WITH A "MORAL WEAKNESS." TRAN VAN HUONG IS NOT MUCH DIFFERENT, HE MAINTAINS, AND WOULD NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH WERE HE ELECTED TO PREVENT A COUP. CO RULES OUT A COALITION WITH ANY OTHER CANDIDATE OR ACCEPTING ANY OFFICE OTHER THAN PRESIDENT. HE CLAIMS HE COULD HAVE BEEN A MINISTER IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IF HE HAD BEEN WILLING TO ACCEPT SUCH A POST.

5. COMMENT: CO, WHO APPEARS QUITE WESTERNIZED, IS BUILDING A LUXURIOUS HOUSE IN DOWNTOWN SAIGON. HE IS SHORT, PLUMP, AND SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH BUT WITH A HEAVY FRENCH ACCENT. HE IS OBVIOUSLY MOST ANXIOUS TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS AND THANKED THE INTERVIEWING OFFICER PROFUSELY FOR COMING TO SEE HIM.

[redacted] b-1 ec ed

[redacted] AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, CO'S CANDIDACY IS BEING CHALLENGED ON GROUNDS THAT THE TIME HE SPENT ABROAD PRIOR TO 1963 DISQUALIFIES HIM UNDER PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 58 (1) OF CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE 10 (2) OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW.

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